



The MARYLAND WOMEN OF COLOR NETWORK is here to support survivors.

If you are interested in giving voice to this issue and supporting the movement to end sexual violence, you can learn more by emailing info@mcasa.org. All are welcome.



HOW SEXUAL ASSAULT AFFECTS US

Sexual assault is a form of oppression, as well as a crime. It is an abuse of power that uses violence and coercion to control, silence, and deny people their autonomy and dignity.

It is a traumatic experience that can affect survivors in unique ways. Trauma responses after a sexual assault vary for every individual. Some common responses can include:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Flashbacks
- Anger
- Sleep disorders
- Impacted sense of identity
- Low self-worth
- Avoidance
- Self-harm
- Loneliness
- Confusion
- Substance abuse

The effects of these trauma responses can continue on for years, and can even worsen if survivors are unable to seek or receive assistance from support services. It is important for service providers to acknowledge that the trauma experienced by a Black woman who survives sexual assault may be compounded by other traumas she may have experienced as a result of discrimination.

People's experiences with sexual violence, including Black women's experiences, can be impacted by their ethnicity, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, disability, income level, wealth, education level, occupation, housing, immigration status, and religion. A survivor's location, like if they live in a rural or remote area, can also play a role. It is essential to recognize that sexual trauma combined with these additional factors can have an effect on the survivors' ability to seek help and access resources that could aid their healing process.

Sexual violence thrives when people who have power in society use that power to commit violence against vulnerable individuals, like members of the Black community. We must all work together to end these forms of violence.

Resources for Survivors

Call 211 to connect to your local rape crisis center

Sexual Assault Legal Institute (SALI)
301-565-2277 | toll-free 1-877-496-SALI (7254)
www.mcasa.org/survivors/sali

Therapy for Black Girls
<https://therapyforblackgirls.com>

Ballet After Dark
www.balletafterdark.com

Additional Resources

Ujima- The National Center on Violence Against Women in the Black Community
www.ujimacommunity.org

National Black Women's Justice Institute
www.nbwji.org

National Women of Color Network
www.wocninc.org

National Organization of Sisters of Color Ending Sexual Assault
www.sisterslead.org

Black Women's Blueprint
www.blackwomensblueprint.org

Black Women's Health Imperative
www.bwhi.org



Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault

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BLACK WOMEN & SEXUAL ASSAULT



1 in 5 Black women are survivors of sexual assault. 6 in 10 Black women reported being subjected to coercive sexual contact by the age of 18.

Smith, C. (April 2023). 5 Black-Led Organizations Working To End Sexual Assault You Should Know. Retrieved from <https://www.binnews.com/content/2021-04-02-5-black-led-organizations-working-to-end-sexual-assault>
National Center on Violence Against Women in the Black Community. (2018). Black Women and Sexual Assault. Retrieved from <https://ujimacommunity.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Ujima-Womens-Violence-Stats-v7.4-1.pdf>

If You've Experienced a Sexual Assault

Get Support

It may take some time to process your emotions and thoughts around the harm you experienced. It is natural for survivors to feel overwhelmed: Fear, anxiety, and anger are normal responses. Resources and support are available to you.

If you would like to talk to someone anonymously about your experience, or are seeking further assistance from nurses, attorneys, or other service providers, you can call 211 or visit MCASA's website at <https://mcasa.org/survivors/find-a-rape-crisis-center> to be connected to an advocate at a rape crisis center in your area. Rape crisis and recovery centers offer private services to adult and child victims as well as their loved ones. These services are **FREE**. Regardless of when the incident happened, it is healthy to talk to a trained individual who can assist you after experiencing sexual assault.

Mental Health Support

The trauma of experiencing sexual violence can be challenging to handle alone. Trauma-informed service providers and culturally-responsive mental health services are available and can be helpful for survivors experiencing difficulties after a traumatic experience.

Mental health professionals can provide confidential,

long-term care for survivors as well as their family, friends, and partners to help build and maintain positive relationships, and use healthy coping skills to lessen the impact of trauma. You are not alone, and it will get better. Maryland's Rape Crisis Centers offer therapeutic counselling, or you can find additional mental health resources by visiting the National Alliance on Mental Illness at <https://www.nami.org>.

Medical Help

Medical help is available to you after a sexual assault. In Maryland, there are hospitals with special services for survivors of sexual assault. You can have a **FREE** medical forensic exam, called a SAFE, to get your injuries treated, and get tested for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and pregnancy, as well as have evidence collected for prosecution. You may be given preventative treatment for STIs, including HIV prevention medication, known as nPEP. **It is important to know that you can get medical help without reporting the assault to the police.**

Consider Reporting the Sexual Assault to Law Enforcement

Telling the police about your sexual assault is difficult and you should never feel pressured by others to report. You may feel hesitant about reporting the offender because you may want to protect them and your community. It is common to think that there are few options to consider when seeking justice. If you are worried about reporting or need help with learning about the reporting process, it can be helpful to speak with a sexual assault service provider.

Legal Help

Survivors have the right to be treated with dignity, respect, and sensitivity during the criminal justice process. The Sexual Assault Legal Institute (SALI) helps protect those rights by providing comprehensive legal services, including issues ranging from employment, housing, education and financial support to criminal justice advocacy, immigration and family law. To speak with a SALI advocate, you can call **301-565-2277**.

Cyberstalking

Cyberstalking includes the unwanted pursuit, harassment, or contact of others via electronic means. A stalker can be an intimate partner, a friend, a coworker, a neighbor or other acquaintance. A cyberstalker may use technology to engage in the following behaviors:

- Installing spyware or GPS tracking software on your computer, on your cellphone, or in your car
- Making threatening calls or sending threatening text messages
- Using social media networking sites to track or harass

If you are experiencing tech abuse, you can find resources at www.endtab.org/resources.

National & Regional Helplines

Department of Defense Safe Helpline

The Department of Defense (DOD) Safe Helpline is a crisis support service that offers assistance through live, one-on-one support for military sexual assault survivors who are seeking help outside of the chain of command. This helpline also supports and provides services for survivors' loved ones and anyone within the DOD community. The Safe Helpline is confidential and secure. This three-tier reporting system will not share names or any other personal information.

www.safehelpline.org

877-995-5247 | Text: 55247

Incarcerated Survivors

The Prison Rape and Sexual Assault Help Line is sponsored by MCASA and the Life Crisis Center. If you experienced rape or sexual assault while incarcerated, or someone you know experienced a sexual assault in a Maryland detention center, jail, or prison, and would like to speak with a confidential advocate, you can call **855-971-4700**. Support staff can connect you to resources and support for victims of sexual assault and rape. They are here to help. This Help Line is a free and confidential resource. **It is not a reporting line.** Advocates can provide you with information on reporting and safety planning.

